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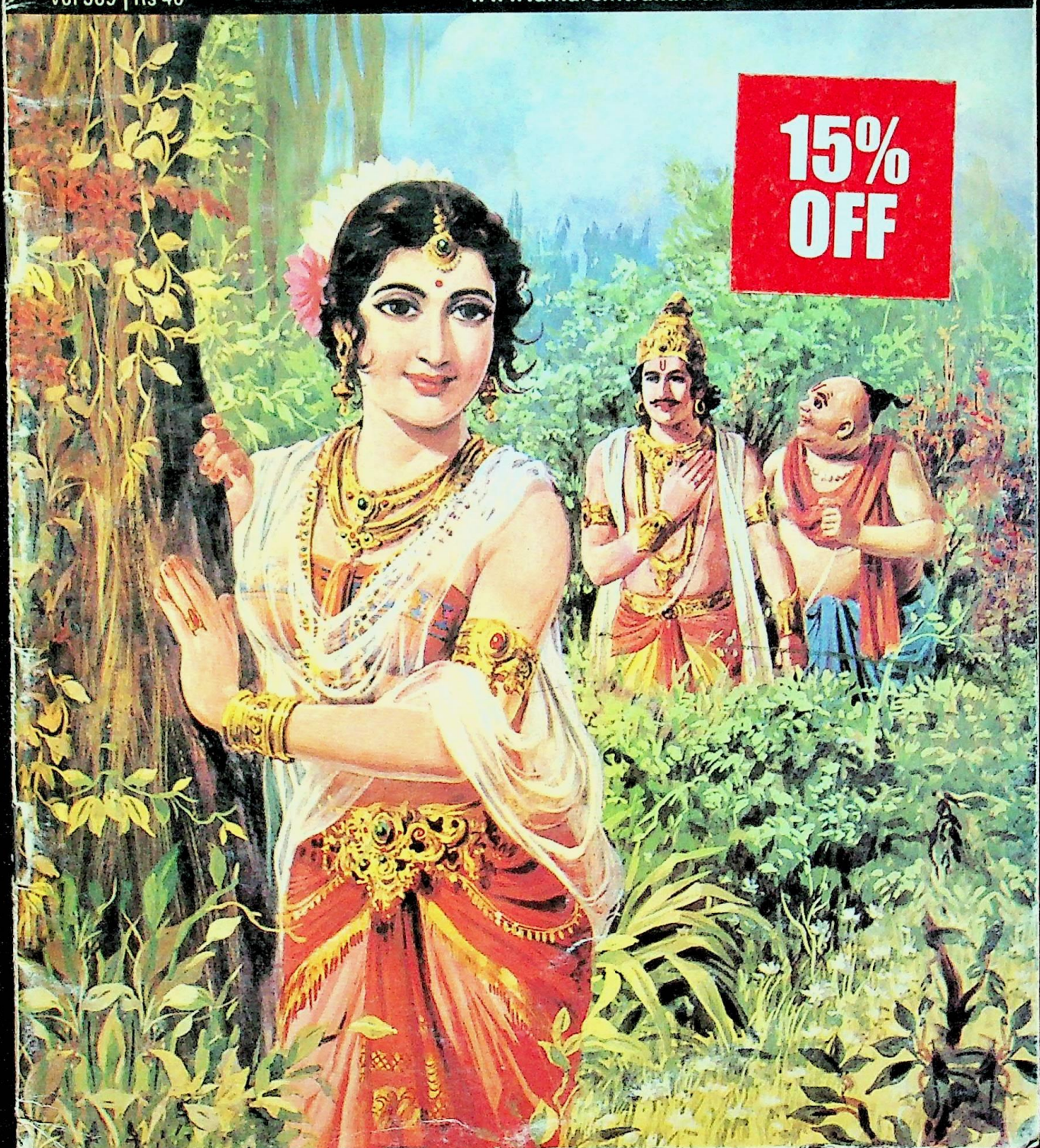

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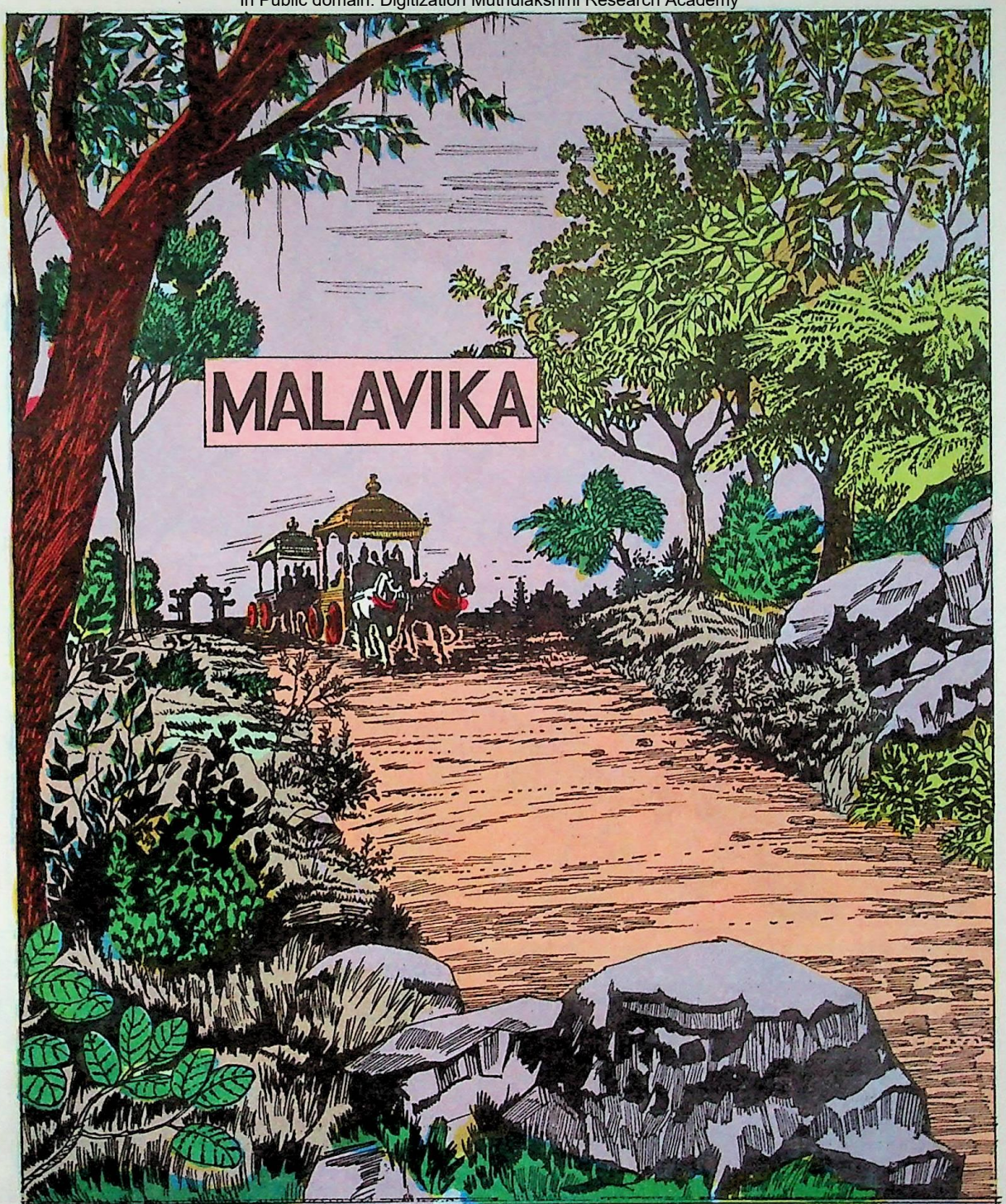

DURING THE SECOND CENTURY B.C. THE TWO COUSINS, YAJNASENA AND MADHAVASENA WERE ENGAGED IN A STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE OF VIDARBHA. ONE DAY, AT DUSK, TWO CHARIOTS STOLE AWAY FROM VIDARBHA AND TOOK THE ROAD TO VIDISHA, A NEIGHBOURING KINGDOM RULED BY AGNIMITRA. ONE OF THE CHARIOTS CARRIED PRINCE MADHAVASENA; PRINCESS MALAVIKA, HIS SISTER; SUMATI, HIS MINISTER AND KAUSHIKI SUMATI'S SISTER; THE OTHER, THEIR ATTENDANTS.

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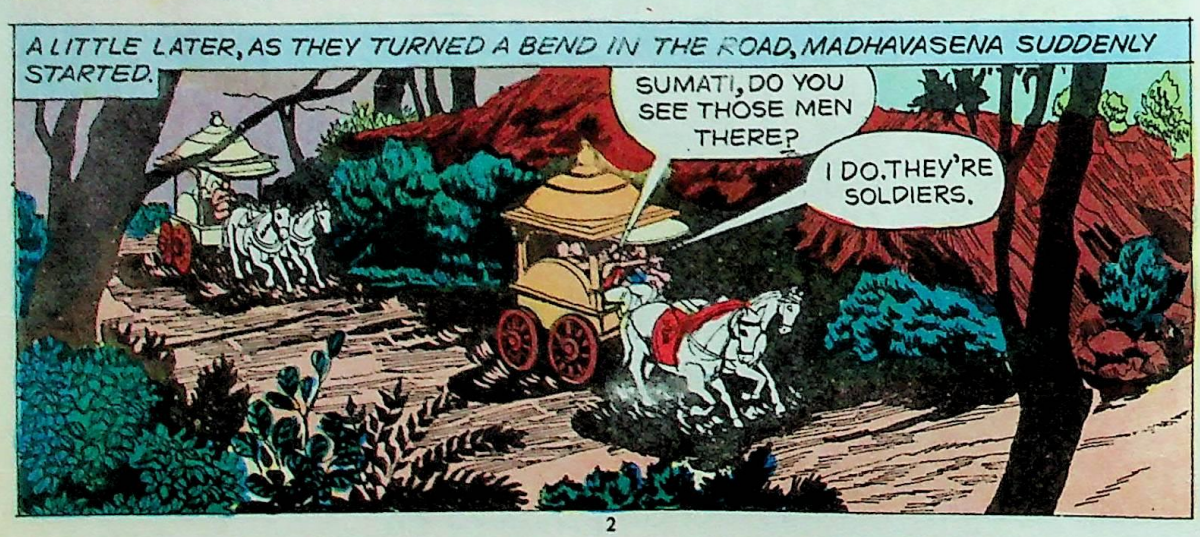

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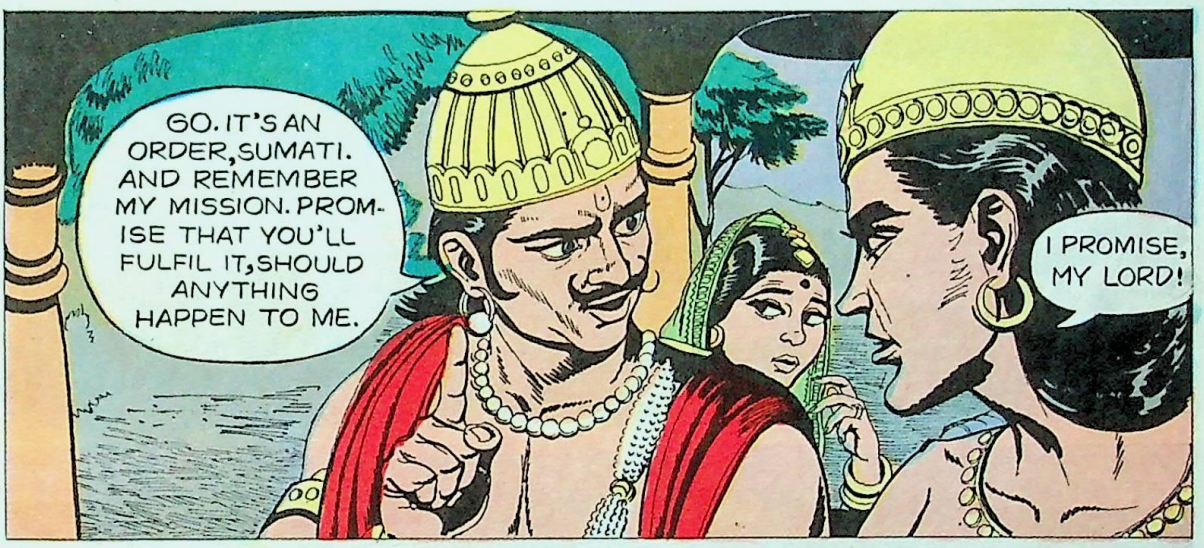

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CONTROLLING THEIR EMOTIONS, THE THREE TREKKED WITH THE CARAVAN.

WHEN NIGHT FELL—

WE'LL HALT NOW, MY FRIEND. WE'LL MOVE ON AGAIN TOMORROW MORNING.

SUMATI, KAUSHIKI AND MALAVIKA TRIED TO RELAX BUT THEIR HEARTS WERE HEAVY.

WHAT DOES FATE HAVE IN STORE FOR ME?

I CANNOT REST TILL I REACH VIDISHA AND FULFIL MY PROMISE.

SUDDENLY—

WHAT IS THIS? WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

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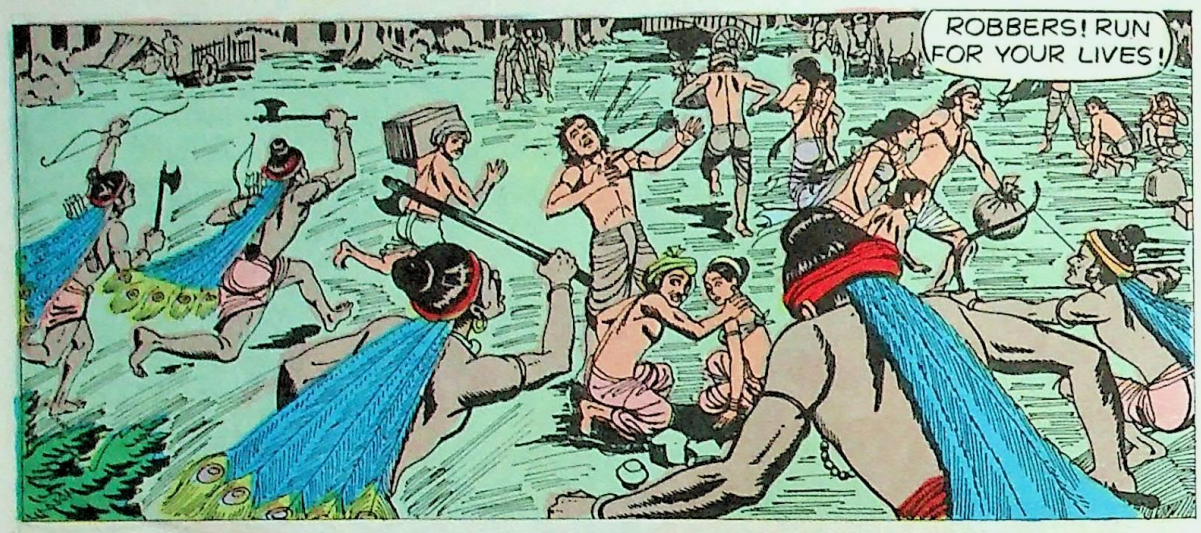

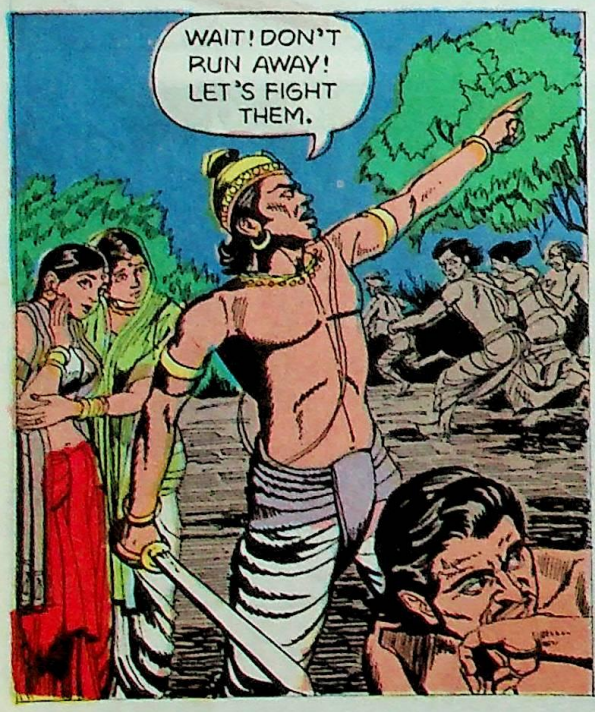

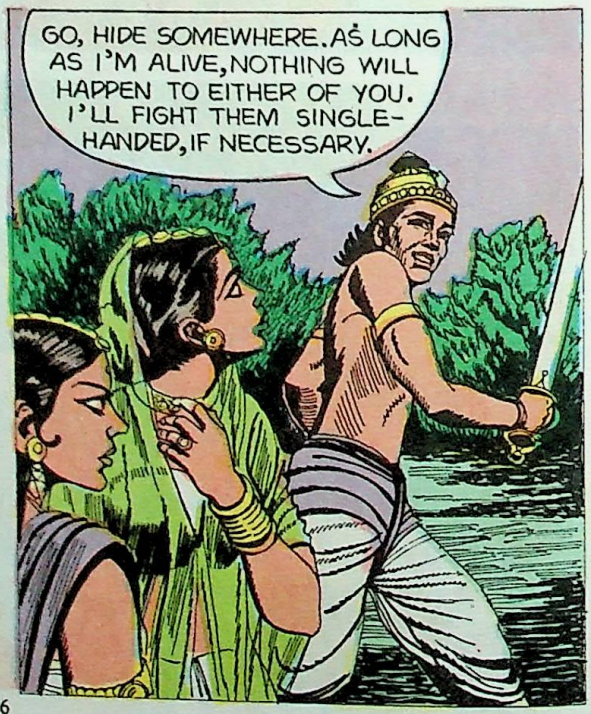

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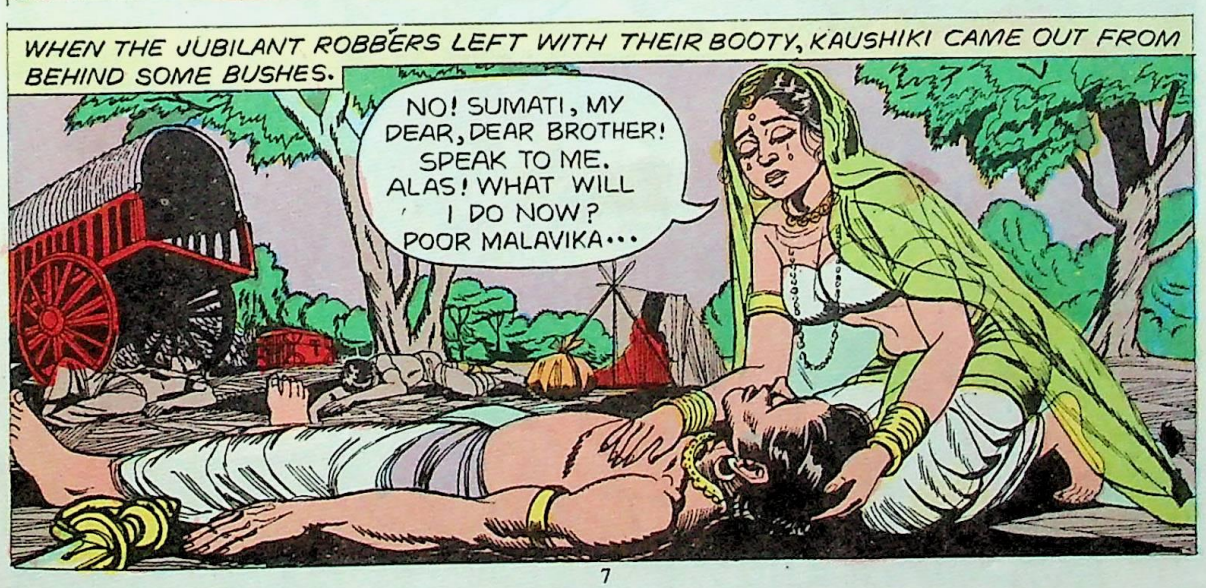

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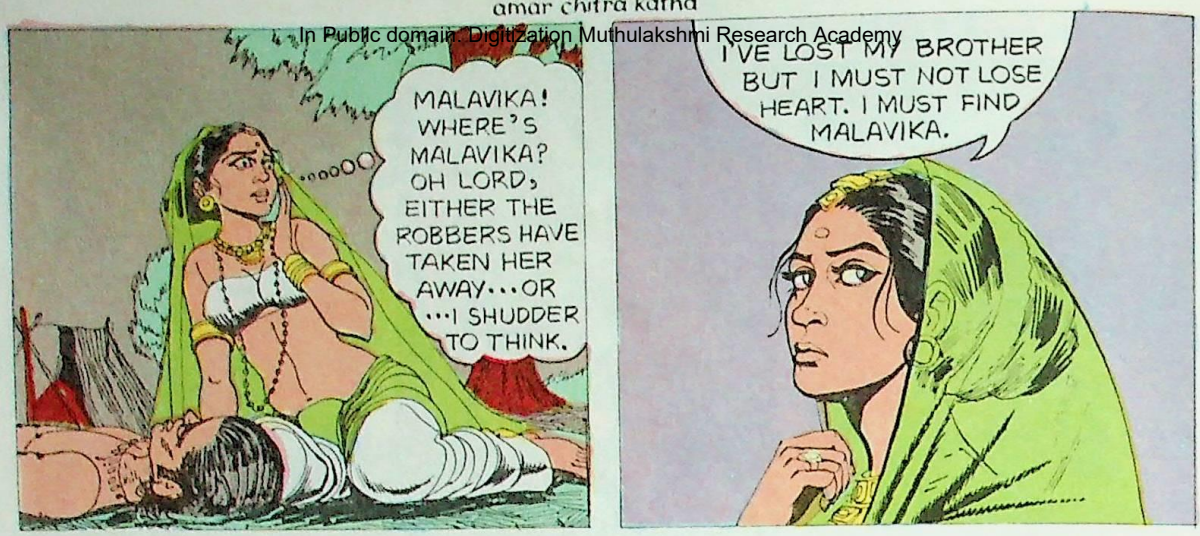

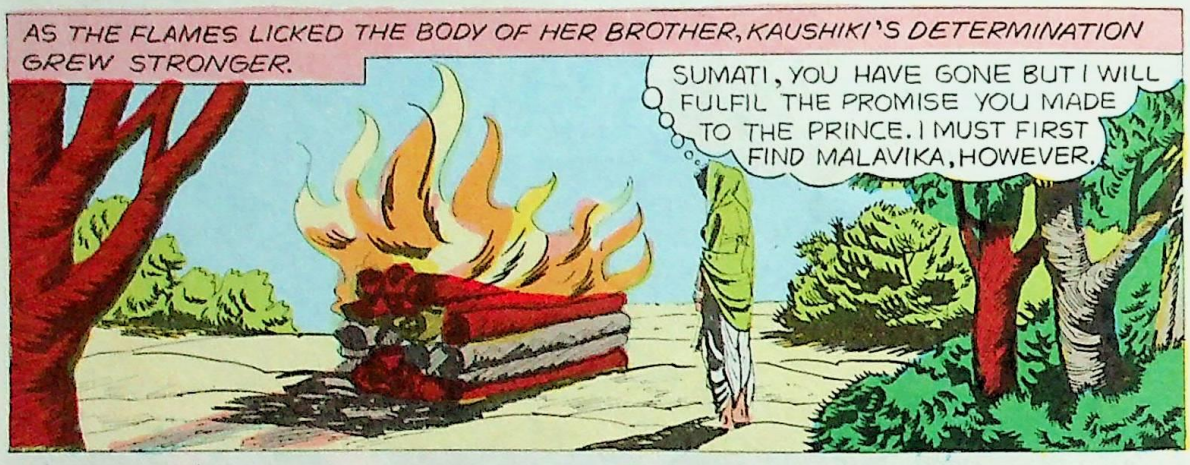

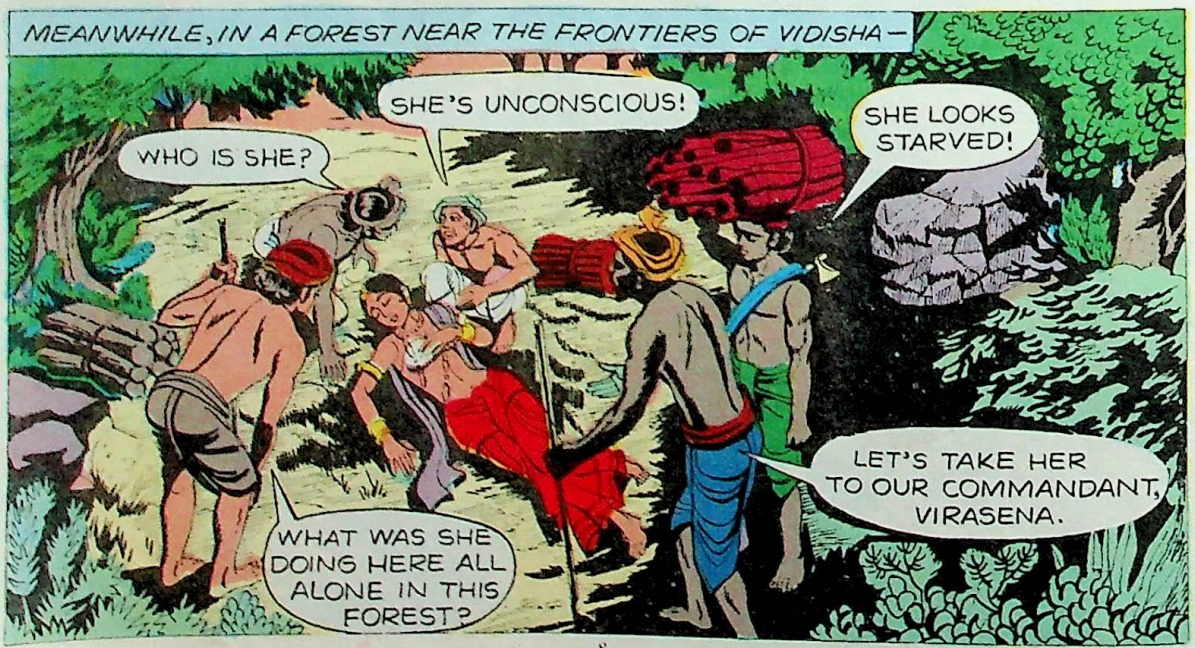

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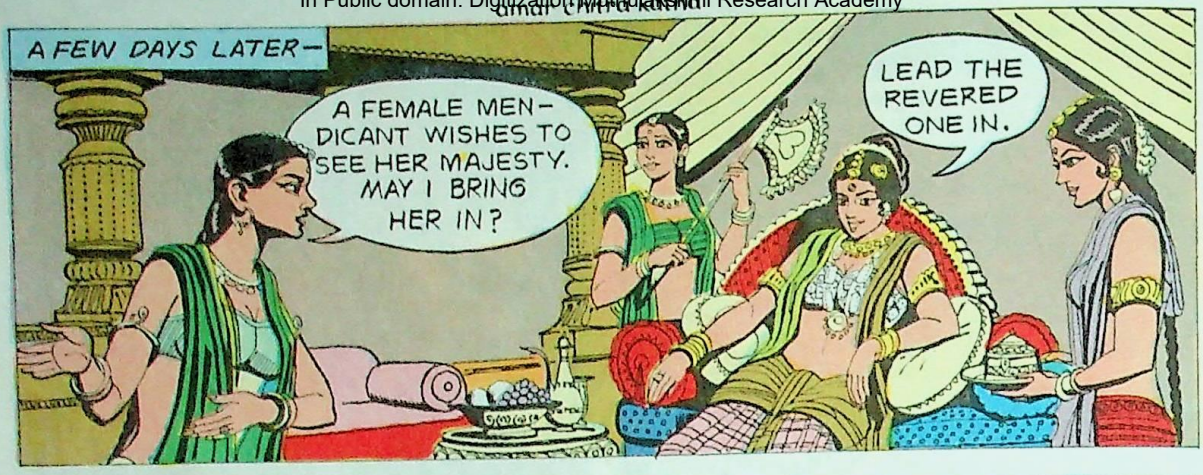

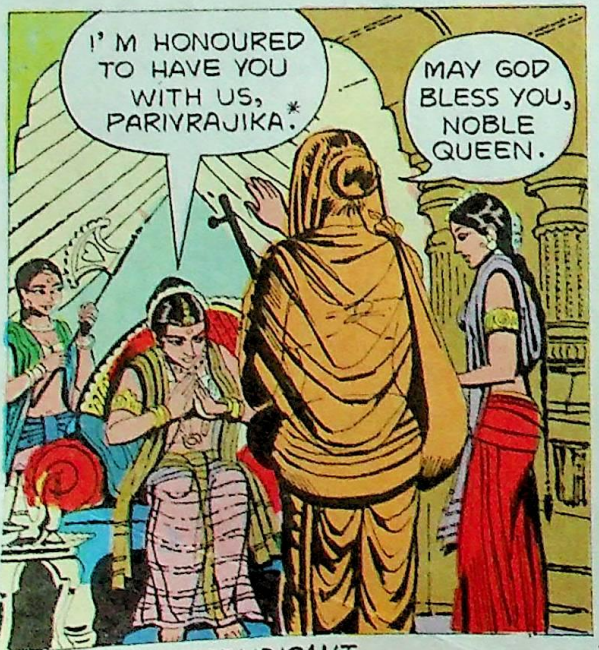

*A FEMALE MENDICANT

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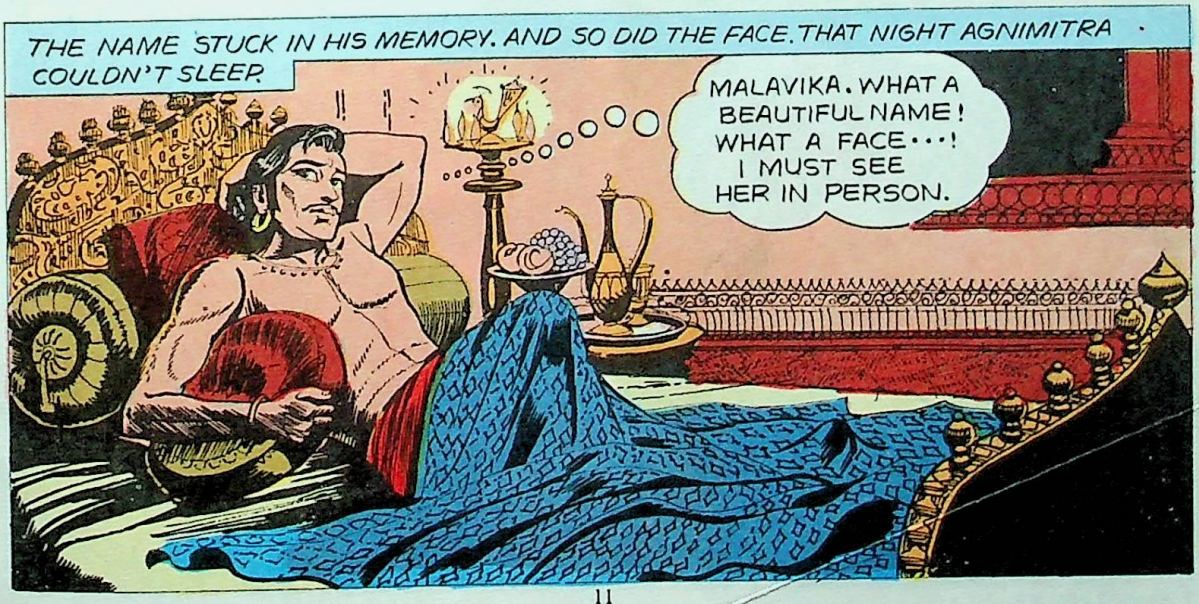

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* KING'S JESTER.

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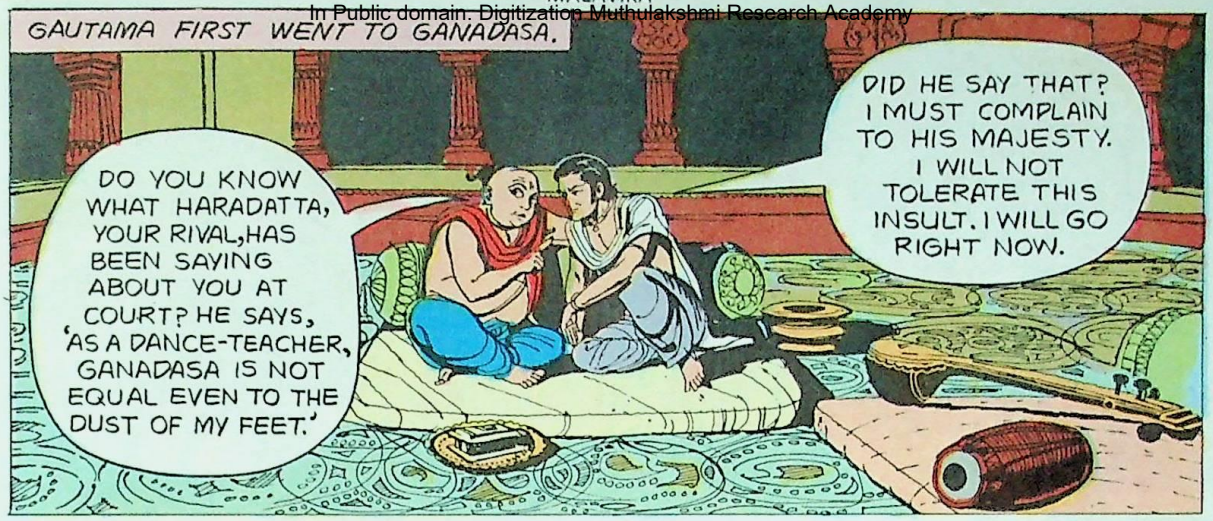

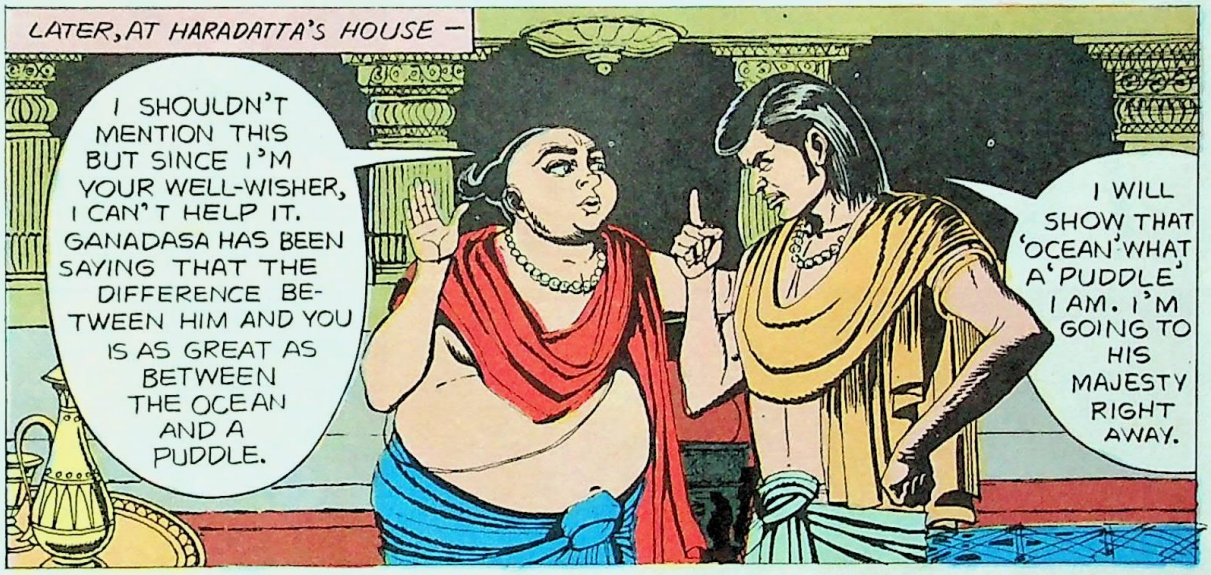

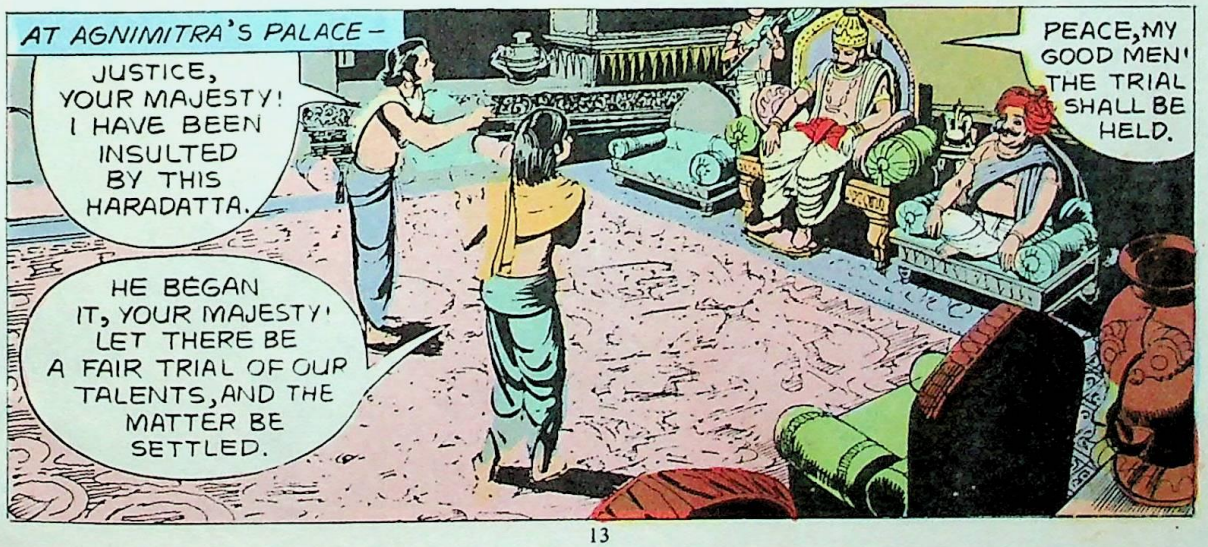

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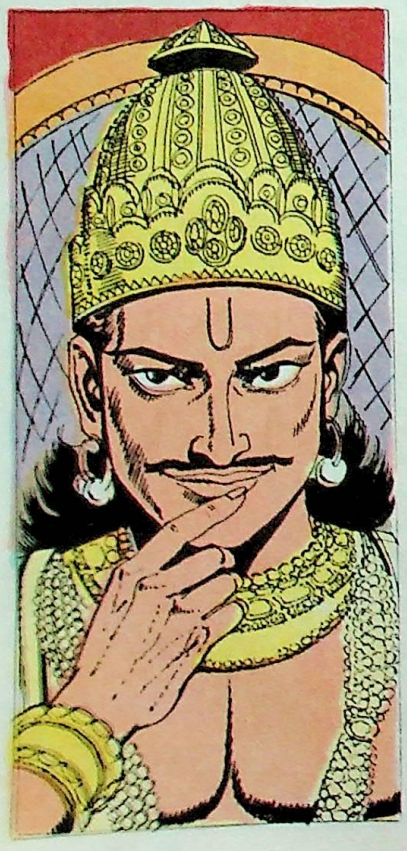
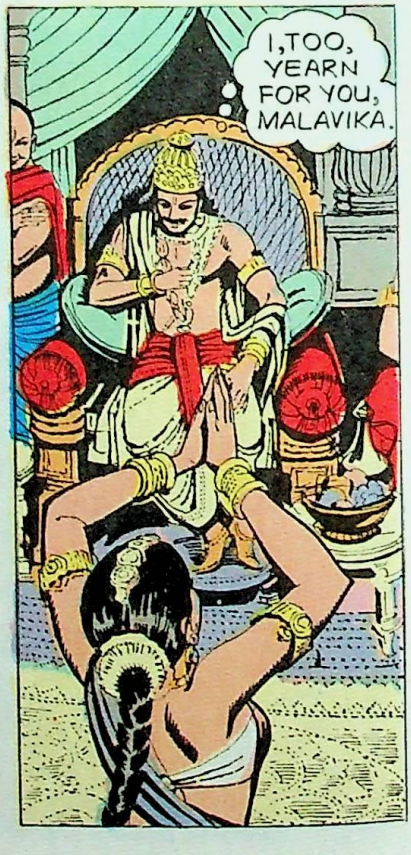
A CONTEST WAS ARRANGED. KAUSHIKI WAS SELECTED TO JUDGE THE PERFORMANCES. GANADASA'S PUPIL, MALAVIKA, WAS THE FIRST TO PERFORM.



THE WORDS OF THE SONG EXPRESSED MALAVIKA'S OWN FEELINGS.



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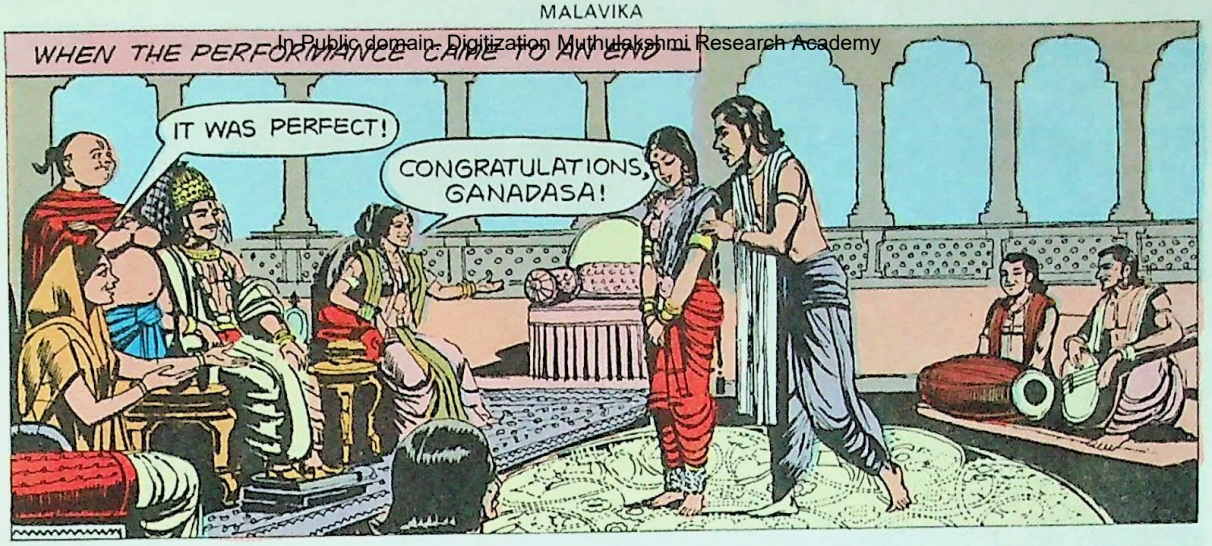

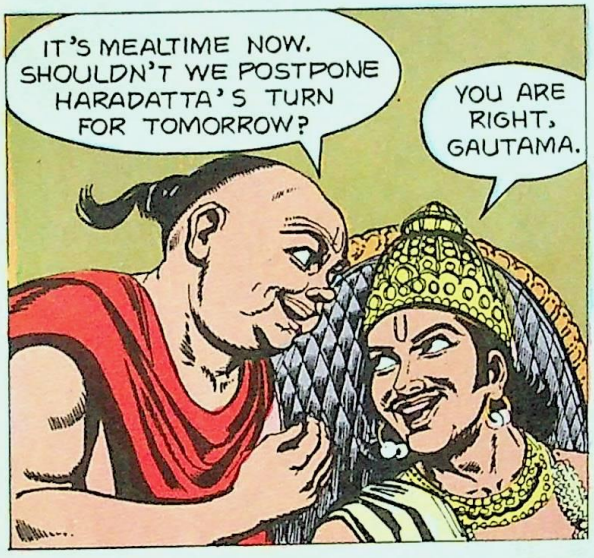

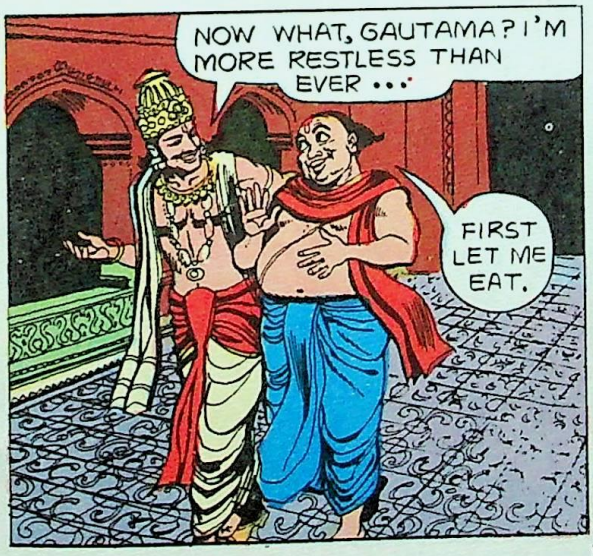

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A FEW DAYS LATER, THE PALACE GARDENS RESOUNDED WITH LAUGHTER AS THE WOMEN OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, BATHED IN THE FRAGRANCE OF FRESH BLOSSOMS, CELEBRATED THE SPRING FESTIVAL.

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*A TREE WHICH WOULD BLOSSOM ONLY IF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN STRUCK IT WITH A DECORATED FOOT.

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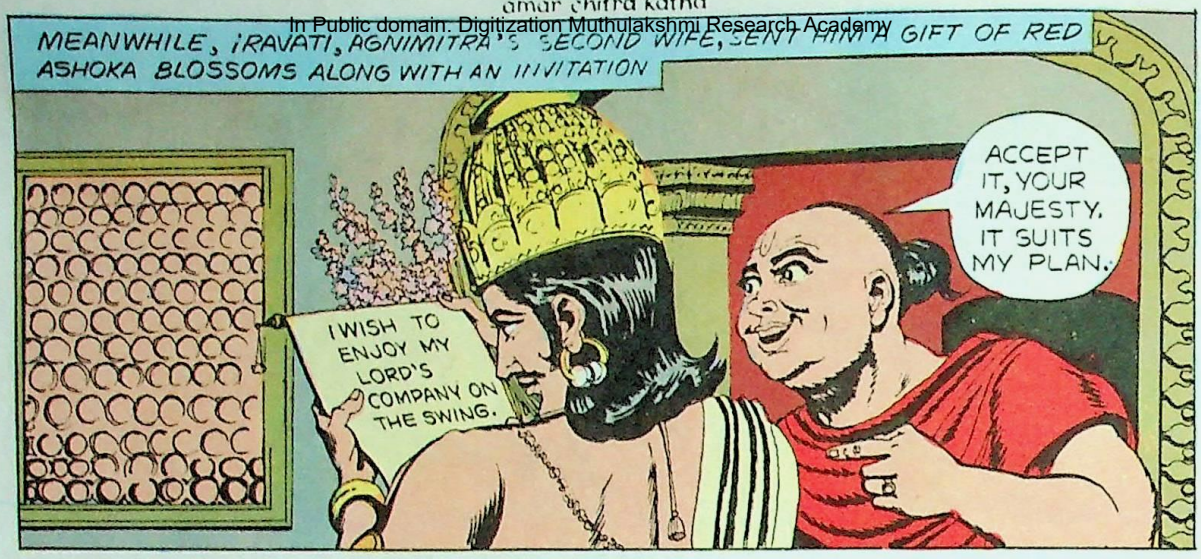

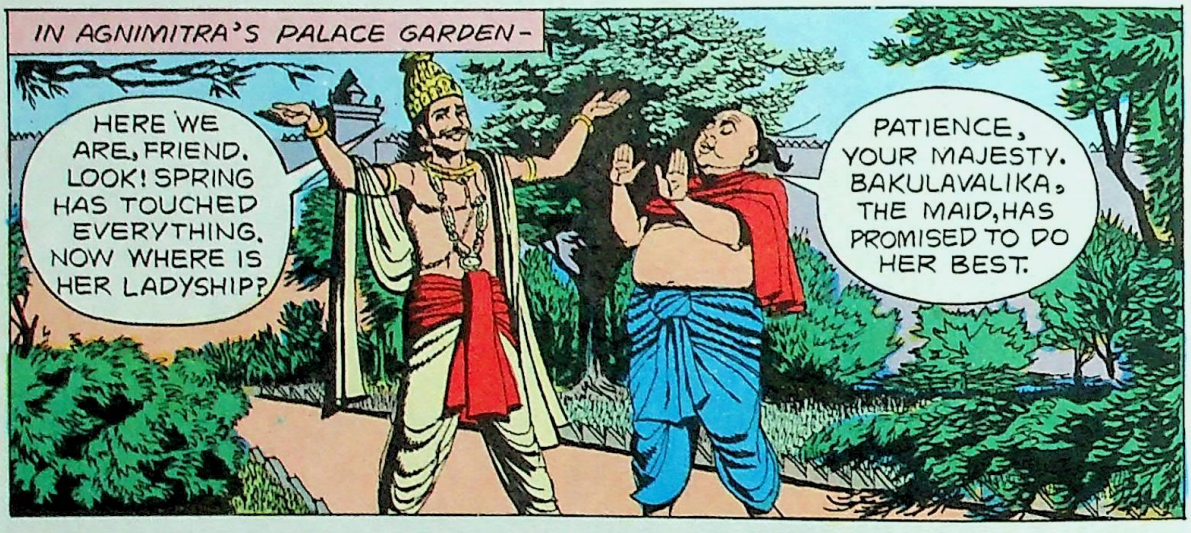

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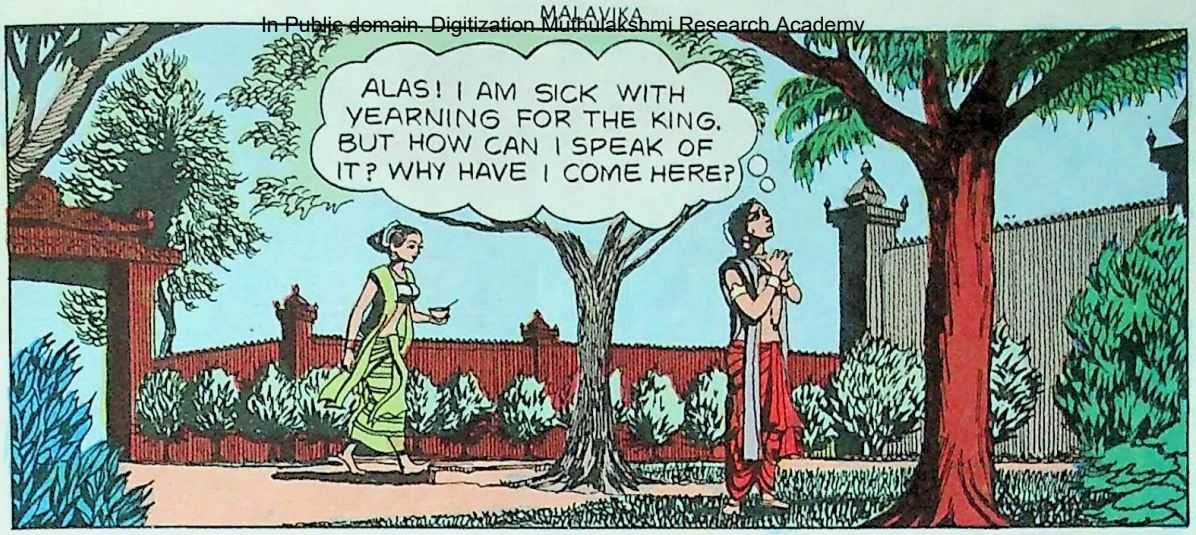

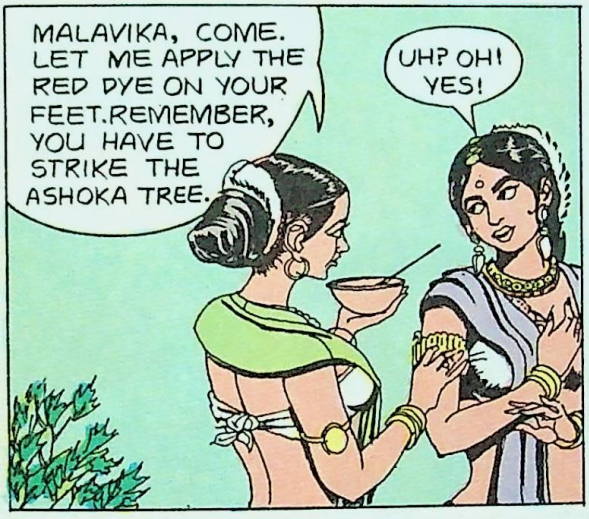

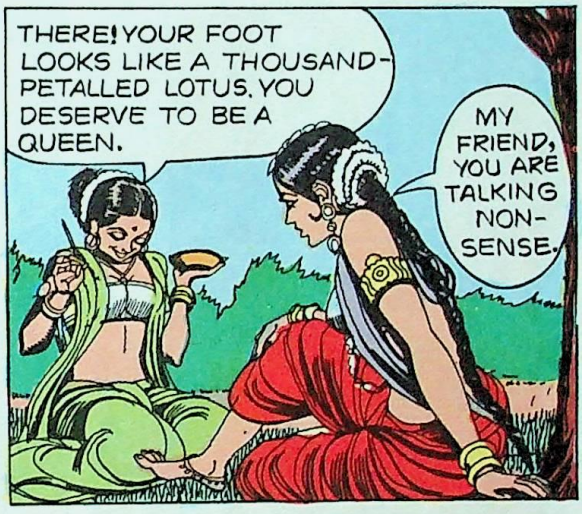

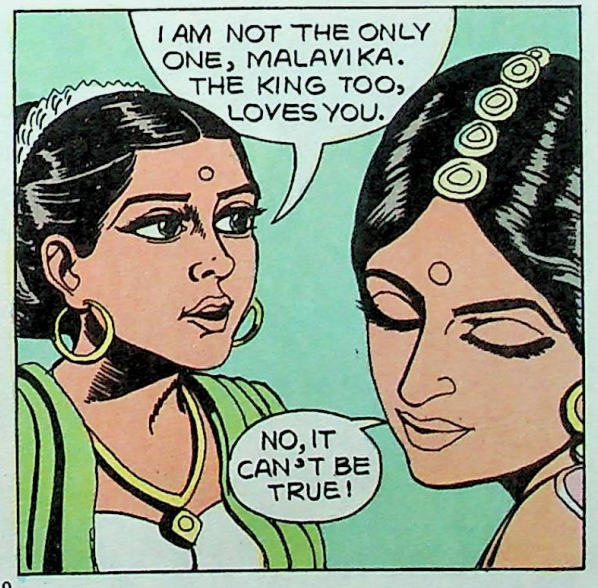

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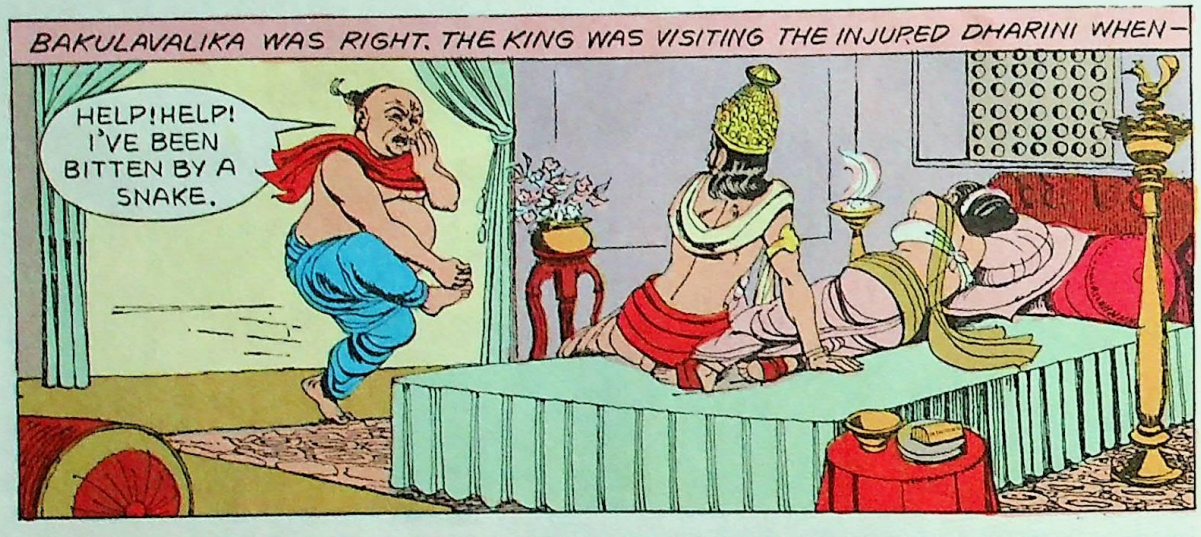

* PHYSICIAN

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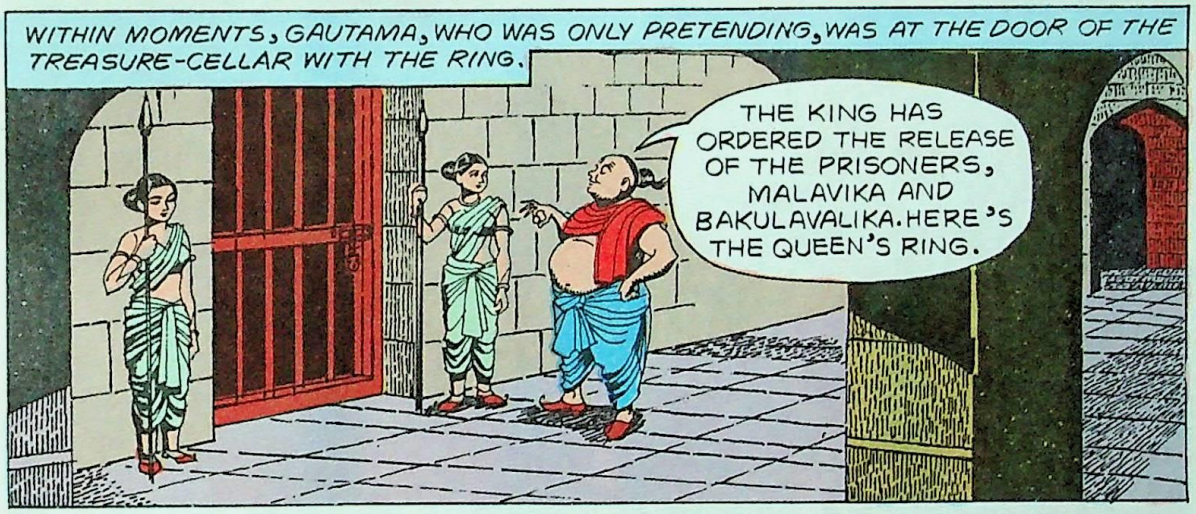

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BEFORE IRAVATI COULD SAY ANOTHER WORD—

YOUR MAJESTY, YOUR MAJESTY, PRINCESS VASULAXMI IS UNCONSCIOUS. SHE WAS FRIGHTENED BY A MONKEY.

I MUST RUSH TO HER.

MALAVIKA AND BAKULA WERE LEFT ALONE.

WHAT NOW! WHEN I THINK OF THE QUEEN, I TREMBLE.

TAKE HEART, MALAVIKA. LOOK! THE ASHOKA HAS BURST INTO BLOOM.

EVEN BEFORE THE LAPSE OF FIVE NIGHTS!

AND THE QUEEN IS ONE WHO KEEPS A PROMISE, MALAVIKA!

WHEN DHARINI HEARD THE GOOD NEWS—

REQUEST MY LORD TO MEET ME BY THE FLOWERING TREE. TOGETHER WE SHALL WITNESS THE SPLENDOUR OF THE BLOSSOMS.

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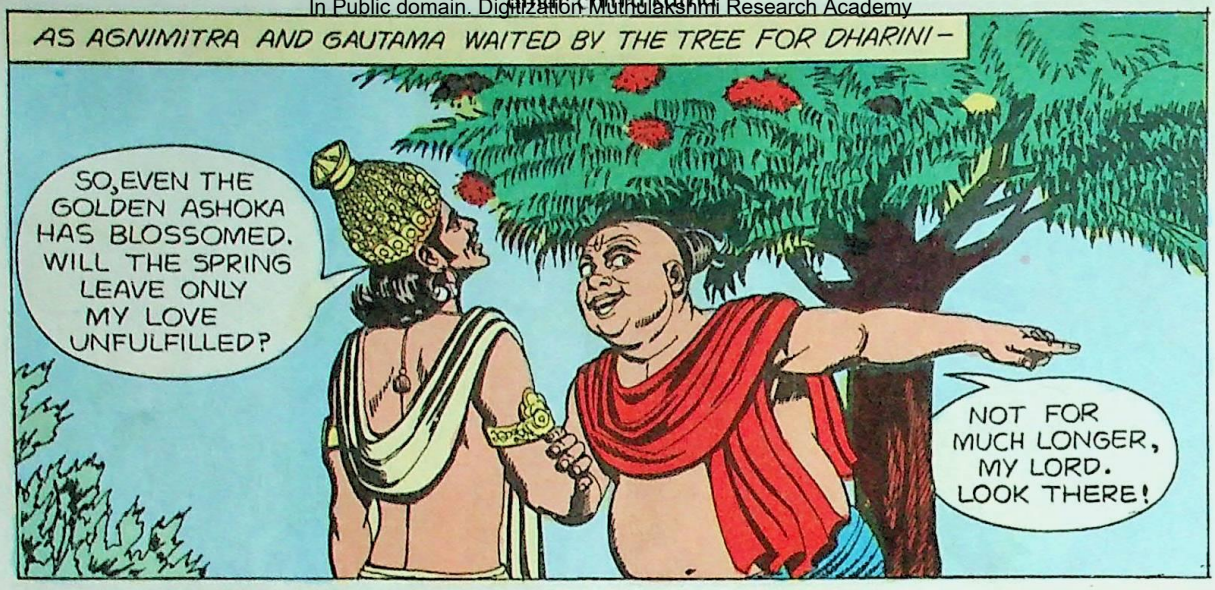

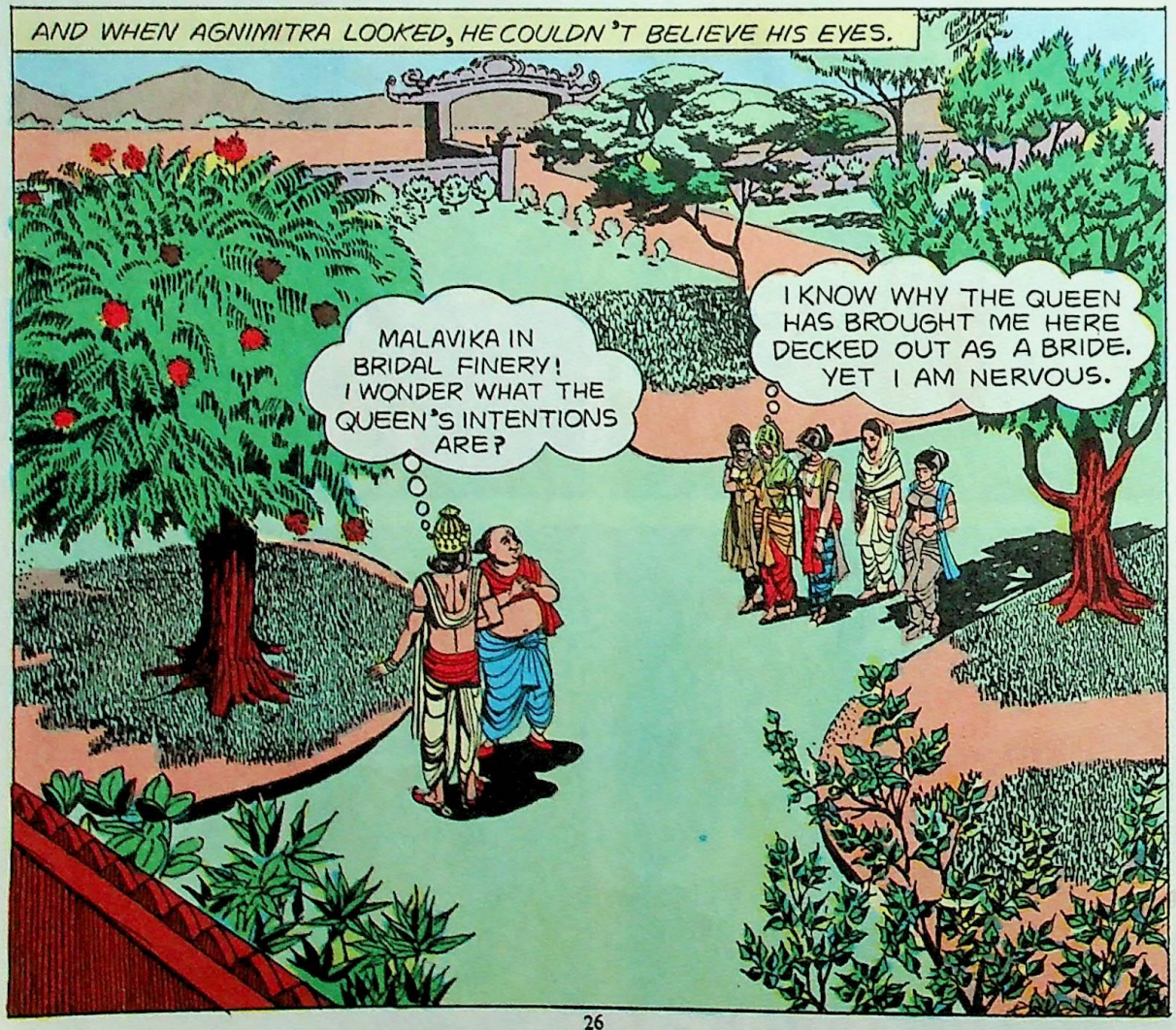

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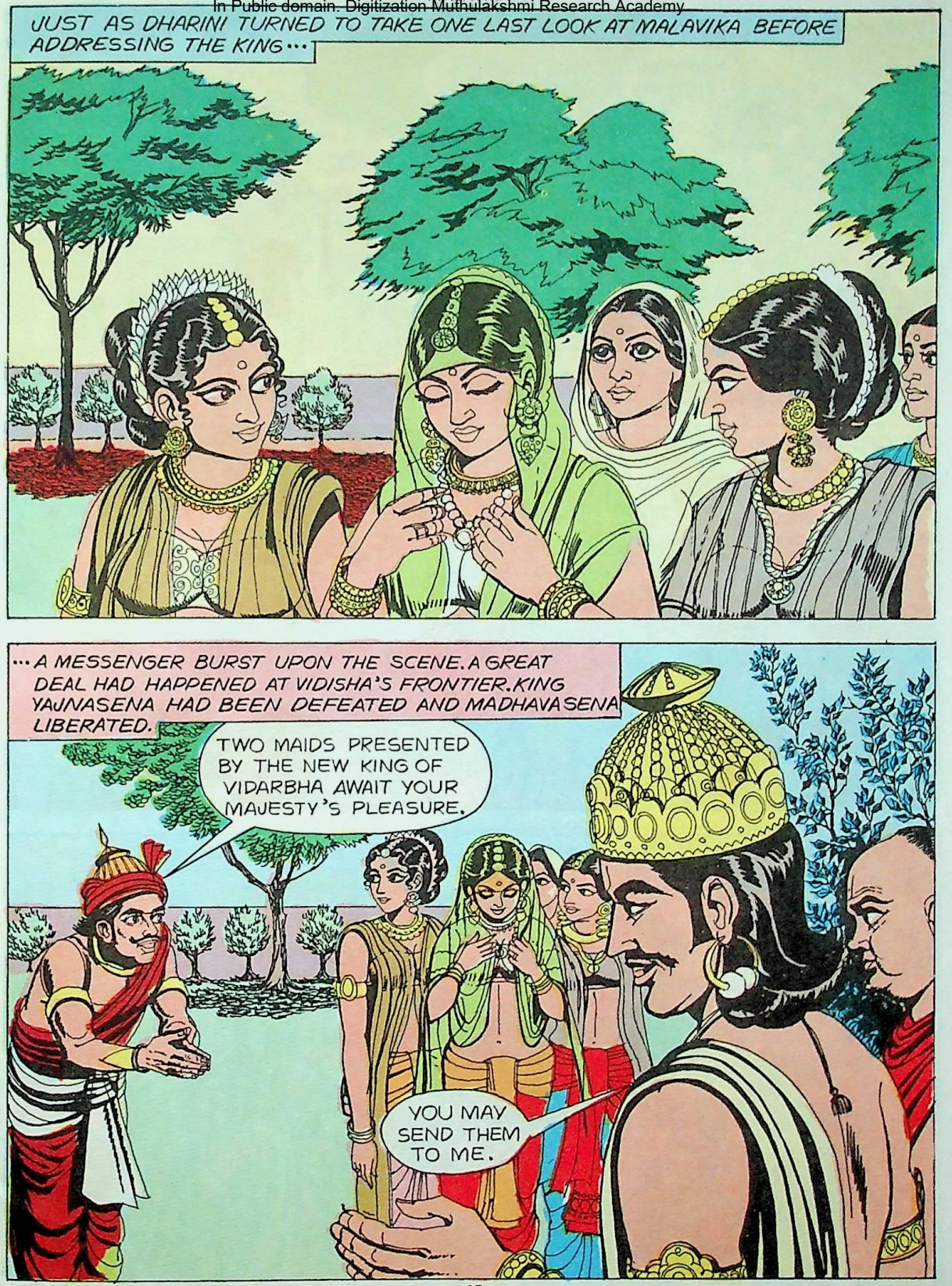

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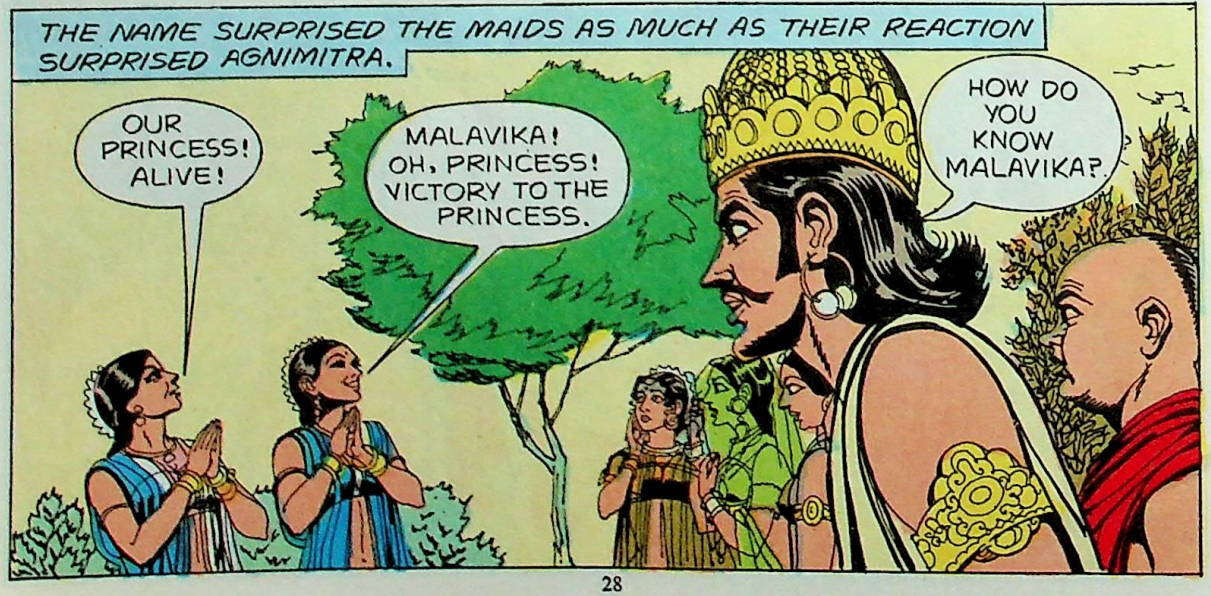

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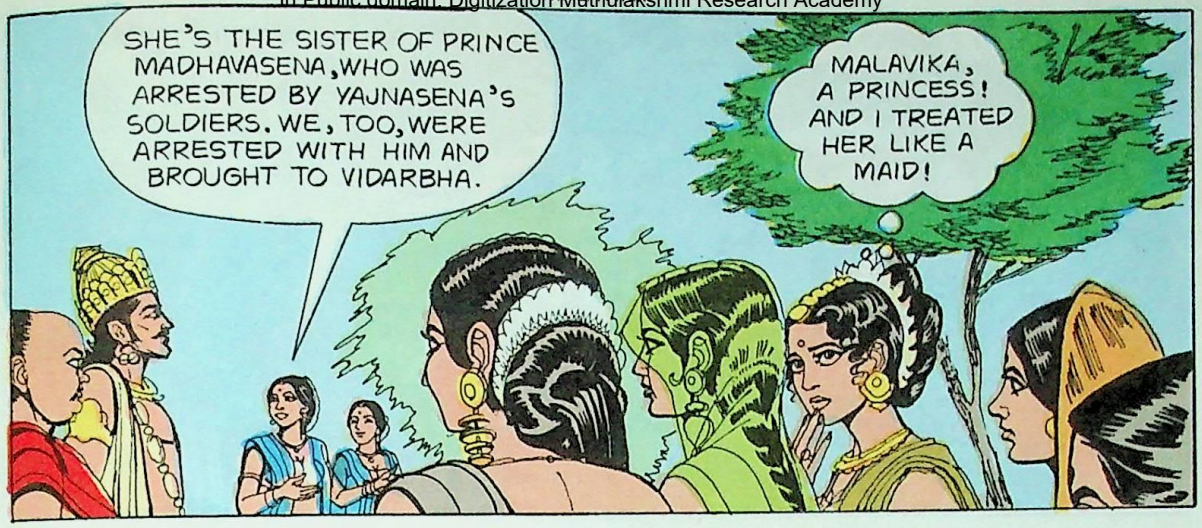

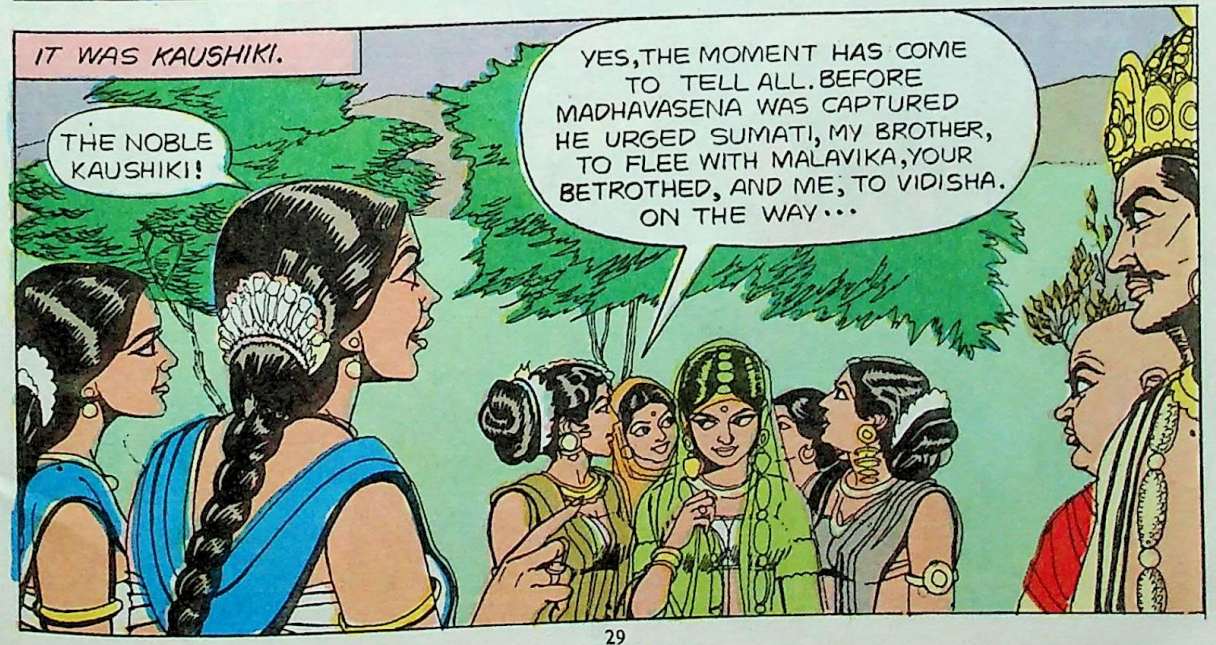

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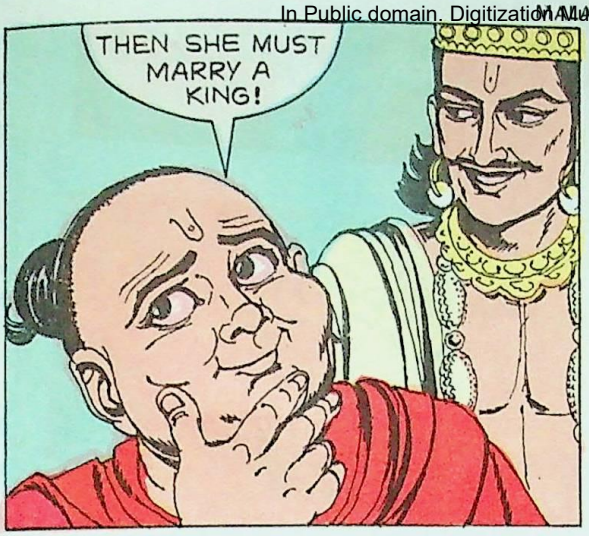

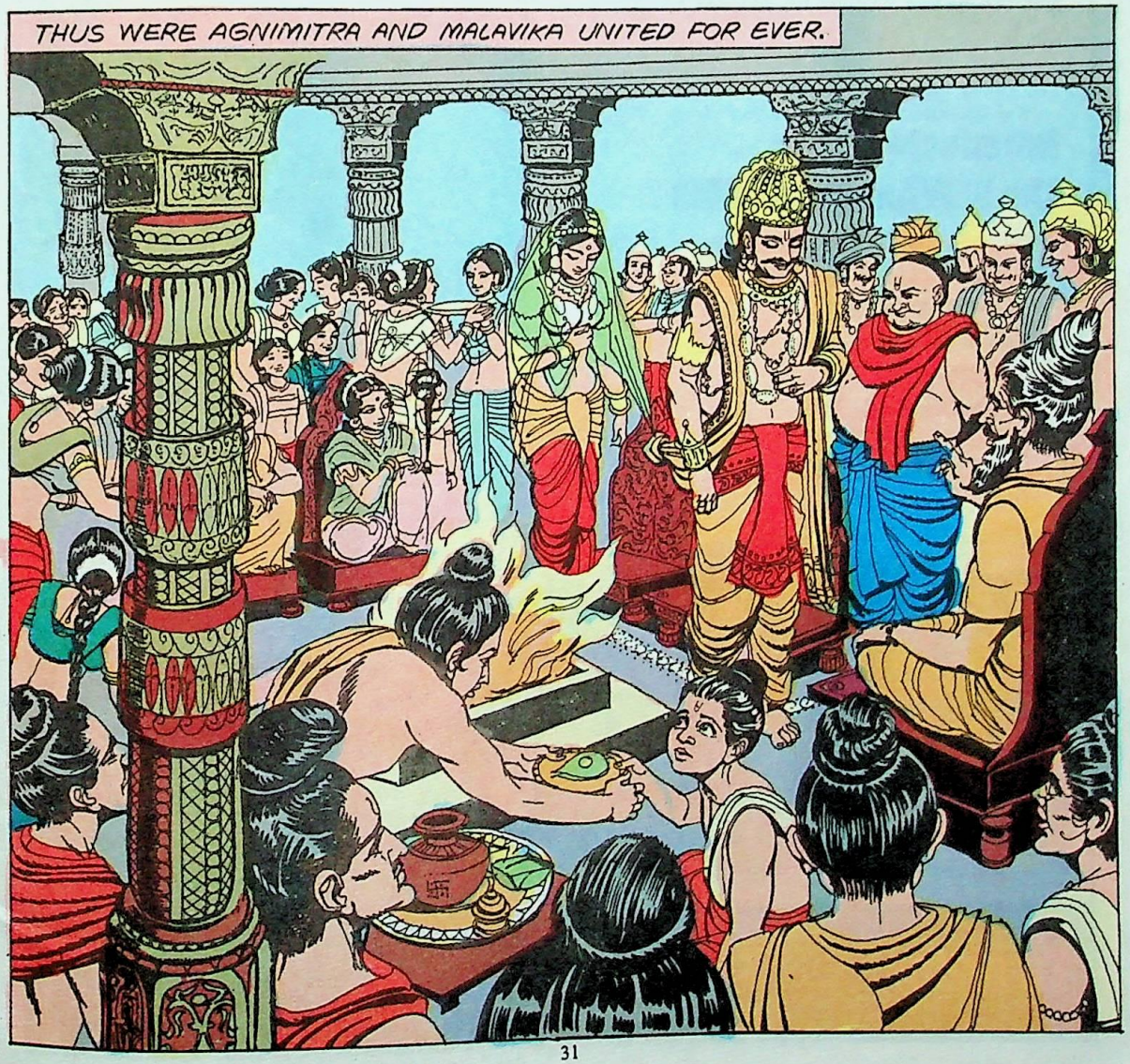

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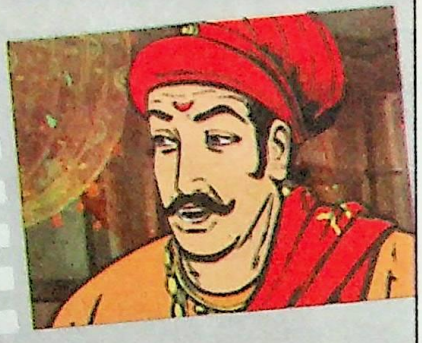

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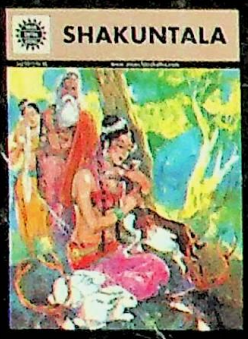

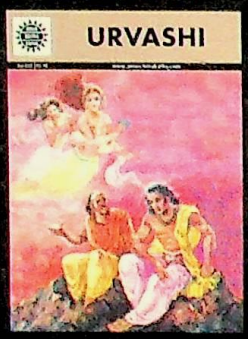

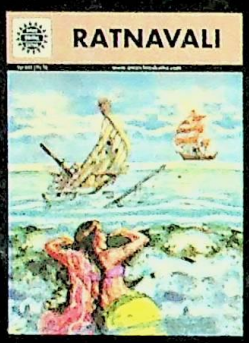

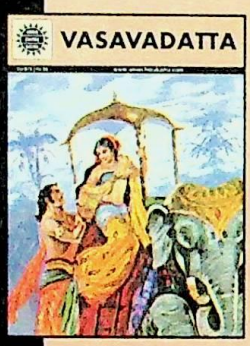

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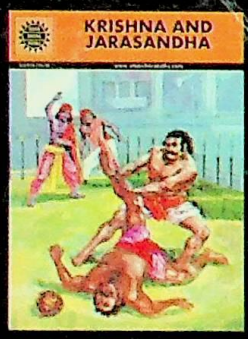

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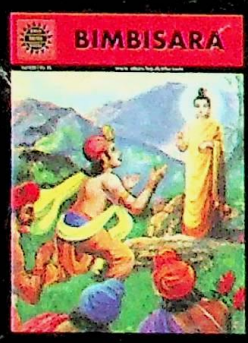

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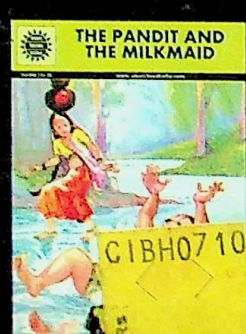

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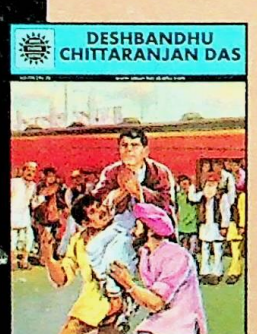

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